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ABSTRACT

This field study report recounts an action research project undertaken by an elementary school teacher to reflect on her practice as a teacher. After a review of the literature on using reflection for personal and professional growth, the ethnographic methodology employed in the study is discussed. The teacher action-researcher took 117 pages of field notes between September and December 1992 while teaching a class of 31 third- and fourth-graders. Twenty specific field journal entries are reproduced and discussed. The study helped the teacher to develop (1) a personal philosophy, (2) knowledge of the relationship between her personal philosophy and educational philosophy, (3) an understanding of the emergence of a teaching metaphor, and (4) a change in classroom action toward more student-centered activities. (Contains 20 references.) (MDM)

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ED 394 631

REFLECTION ON PRACTICE: TAKING THE TIME TO THINK

A Field Study Report

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

MASTERS OF ARTS DEGREE IN EDUCATION

With Concentration in Elementary Education

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Introduction

I have been employed in the West Contra Costa County School District (formally called Richmond Unified) since 1988. I have taught grades three through six. In addition to my classroom duties I am advisor to the Student Council. The Student Council sponsors many school activities which allow me to have relationships with students from many grade levels.

It is difficult to summarize my feelings on education and teaching, but I found that this study aided me in identifying and articulating my philosophy. Through the process of reflection I was able to learn about my feelings and ideas related to teaching. Perhaps the most important aspect of my personal philosophy on education is that I believe in education that is student centered. I work hard to engage students in curriculum; specifically, by allowing students to make curriculum choices at certain times in the school year. I have a hands on approach to teaching. In addition to lecturing and reading from a text I engage the students in a range of activities such as plays, role playing, games and art which enhance their learning. This approach allows the learner to become involved in curriculum.

I also generate activities that encourage students to act responsibly and urge students to think about the consequences related to their actions. I believe in social and political involvement and encourage my students to feel empowered to become active citizens.

Humor is a vital and necessary component to life and especially to life in the classroom. I think that learning should be fun and that when students are relaxed and comfortable they are able to learn more efficiently. I use humor to encourage my students to break through learning barriers as well as to deal with the difficult circumstances of their lives. I have great respect for my students and feel that I have learned as much, if not more, from them. I see teaching as a process. During the process of teaching and learning mistakes are made, but I attempt to maintain the perspective that we all have things to learn. I work towards an open and caring relationship with my students. My desire to become a better teacher is what led me to this study.

I had already been keeping a personal journal for self-growth for many years and felt that I could apply reflection through journal writing to my

professional life. I believe that journal writing is a powerful tool for exploring feelings and behavior. I also believe that knowing oneself is paramount to psychological and professional development. The goal of this study was for me to reflect on my classroom practice and to document how reflection on practice led to a transformation in my practice.

I started my study with the assertion that reflection on practice could lead to transformation. Finding the appropriate methodology was difficult; I knew where I wanted to go, but I had no idea how to arrive at my destination. The literature review process provided me with the opportunity to explore various disciplines. For example, I read material from the following areas: anthropology, psychology, philosophy, feminism, and education. At times I was overwhelmed with the diversity of possible directions I could take.

I gathered my data from September 1, 1992 to December 15, 1992 by taking daily field notes. These field notes consisted of descriptions of my students, lessons, school, reaction to events, and feelings related to my practice as a classroom teacher. Nightly I would use my field notes as a prompt for a journal. My journal became a field text providing me with data. I then analyzed my data, identifying recurrent themes and patterns in my practice. My rhythm in the classroom emerged as the most dominant theme. I decided to analyze my rhythm because it was a central concern throughout the field text. While other issues arose, it became clear that I had a lot of feelings about my rhythm in the classroom. Out of my analysis, my personal philosophy related to education was clarified, in addition the metaphor of a river emerged. The metaphor of the river has become a guiding principle aiding me in understanding my practice as a classroom teacher. Thus, my transformation consisted of : 1) emergence of a personal philosophy 2) the knowledge of the relationship between my personal philosophy and my educational philosophy 3) an emergence of a teaching metaphor 4) a change in classroom action.

Self-reflection is an area of educational research which is gaining more status and credibility. I believe that this study provides one example of transformation based on reflection.

Literature Review

Reflection and the use of reflection for purposes of professional growth are central to this study. In his book Experience and Education, Dewey (1949) discusses the importance of reflection and the union between observation and memory. He contends that reflection occurs when observation and memory take place simultaneously. He further believes that, in order for reflection to occur, the characteristics of open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness must be present. Open-mindedness is listening and considering the validity of divergent viewpoints; responsibility is the awareness of the consequences of actions, and wholeheartedness exists when open-mindedness and responsibility are an integral part of an individual's life (Boody, 1992).

According to Dewey observation can lead to the transformation of an individual. Knowing the significance and meaning of what we observe is essential for transformation to take place. "Observation alone is not enough. We have to understand the significance of what we see, hear, and teach. This significance consists of the consequences that will result when what is seen is acted upon" (Dewey,1949, p. 18). Reflection should have a goal and the goal needs to be important to the observer in order for beneficial reflection leading to transformation to occur.

Knowing one's past, as well as understanding the present, provides important information for dealing with future problems and challenges. An awareness of the idea that one's personal past and present affect one's future is a fundamental element in the process of reflection. Thus, self-knowledge is an essential part of the process of reflection and transformation. Autobiography and journal writing are two methods that can be used to obtain self-knowledge. Through self-knowledge a teacher can begin to see how life experiences shape behavior in the classroom. Self-knowledge is essential to good teaching.

In his book, The Reflective Turn: Case Studies In and On Educational Practice (1991) Donald Schon, like Dewey emphasizes the importance of self-study. He writes about the importance of seeing patterns of activity in one's professional life. His writings reflect his belief that professionals think in action all the time.

> Reflection is on the spot action, the knowing response to an immediate situation; but more often than not, the Knowing along with the moment of reflection disappear transparent to and absorbed into their effective results. ... Reflection on action refers to the ordered, deliberate systematic application of logic to a problem in order to resolve it. (p. 2)

Schon's (1983) viewpoint is different from the dominant belief that technical rationality (a professional model for problem-solving based on the application of theories and techniques) is the best way to approach and solve problems. He does not think that technical rationality addresses the problems that professionals come across in their daily work. Instead he believes that reflection and reflective practice are a more effective tool for professional growth. He suggests that professionals engage in conversation with others or with the situation itself. He believes that the situation itself "talks back." That is thinking about a problem can lead to a solution or reframing of the problem. Through the process of reflection the practitioner can begin to discover the complexities of a problem and a new perspective may emerge. Past experiences and on-the-spot experimentation are also factors that contribute to the process of problem solving.

In the article "Reflective Teachers" Terry Wildman (1987) states: "Teachers need to be more reflective and in control of their own professional lives" (p.12). He also discusses the importance of teachers' developing observational skills in order to reflect. In addition to specific strategies which aid in reflection Wildman observes that "Teachers need intrinsic motivation for reflection" (p.12). Like Dewey, Wildman contends that a teacher must feel that the process of reflection is a valid, worthwhile activity.

Teachers involved in the process of reflection must see the value of their endeavors. Keeping journals and reflecting upon them can not be viewed as just another task imposed by a school district or principal. Teachers already feel that they are under enormous pressure and may feel that the process of reflection is just too time consuming. Teachers must therefore make the choice to become a reflective professional. Often reflection is private and can be painful; it is difficult to look at oneself without harsh judgments. "Teacher reflection can be an intensely personalized process... personal

dilemmas about teaching are often laid bare as teachers reflect about what goes on in their classrooms " (Wildman, 1987, p. 13).

Researchers Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly have done extensive work in the area of teacher education and have examined the role that "personal practical knowledge" plays in the making of a good teacher. According to Clandinin and Connelly "personal practical knowledge" connotes the validation of a combining of a teacher's experience with who she is as a person. These authors see the importance of teachers' exploring their "personal practical knowledge." In their book Teachers As Curriculum Planners: Narratives of Experience (1988) they discuss the use and importance of journal keeping.

> One of the tools we have found useful is to keep an ongoing journal account of our daily actions and our thoughts about those actions. The journals are ongoing records of practices and reflections on those practices. .... This ongoing reflection-on-action on a daily basis begins to provide insight into personal knowledge when you reread entries over several days and weeks. (p. 34)

In the article, "Telling Teaching Stories" (1992) Clandinin and Connelly discuss and define their philosophy of education and specifically the education of teachers. Many of their ideas have their roots in Dewey's theories on teacher education. Their central views are as follows:

1. Teacher education is lifelong. We continue to educate ourselves as teachers in our classroom and in our lives as a whole.

2. Teacher education must be viewed in a historical context. The past, present, and future must always be viewed in relationship to each other. Events occur as a result of several factors.

3. Teaching is an educative relationship among people, including teachers, support staff, administration, custodial, parents, and students and the self.

The first assumption that teacher education is lifelong is very significant. Teachers are viewed not only as fulfilling a role, but also as being people. Clandinin and Connelly's perspective is philosophical as well as psychological, and many educators might strongly disagree with them. The acknowledgment of the importance of the teacher is both exciting and central to this study. Knowing oneself is related to the concept of seeing education as life long. Reflection is a tool for self-exploration. There are several tools one can use for reflection; for example, one can reflect in a journal or through sharing stories about life in the classroom.

> Life is a story we live. We think of life almost as one thinks of a work of fiction: we have one or many plot lines: we are a character in our own stories. .... Thinking of life as a story is a powerful way to imagine who we are, where we have been and where we are going. In our view, people live lives and tell stories of those lives and people are characters in their own and others stories. This is a consequence of viewing life as a story. We live stories. (p. 9)

The idea that stories and narrative can aid teachers in self-reflection is central to this study and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3: Methodology (see pages 19,20).

Clandinin and Connelly (1992), like other educational researchers involved in educational reform, i.e. "Teacher As Researcher" movement, believe that professional growth is a result of inquiry. The idea that education is an active rather than a passive experience is an important shift for both teachers and students. When teachers take charge of their own inquiry the possibility of empowerment exists. The "Teacher as Researcher" movement places the teacher in a position of power allowing her to fully participate in the process of research as opposed to being the object of inquiry. Structured reflection provides the opportunity to engage in the type of inquiry that allows one to discover meaning in stories. "Through rewriting and retelling we begin to transform ourselves and see new possibilities" (p. 10). As we write and think about our experiences we have the unique opportunity for self-discovery in a professional context.

Carl A. Grant and Kenneth M. Zeichner in their article, "On Becoming A Reflective Teacher" (1981) discuss the importance of teachers becoming reflective. "Choosing between becoming a reflective teacher or an unreflective teacher is one of the most important decisions that you will have to make" (p. 5). Like Clandinin and Connelly, Grant and Zeichner hold the opinion that reflection is fundamental to making decisions related to education. "We need reflective teachers to play an integral role in this [educational reform]" (p. 13).

The concept of viewing the teacher as a person with beliefs that affect teaching and the classroom is gaining popularity among researchers. Many educational researchers see this as a good shift in perspective because reflecting on our beliefs can lead to transformation, and an analysis of beliefs and philosophy can become a catalyst for change. According to Grant and Zeichner (1981), they believe "If we remain tentative about our beliefs, the possibility will remain that we may revise our thinking if future evidence warrants it. On the other hand if we are dogmatic about our beliefs and refuse to entertain the possibility that we may be in error, the avenues for further growth are closed off" (p.13).

Grant and Zeichner also state that: "If you are a reflective teacher, your teaching behavior is a manifestation of your teaching philosophy and you become unswerving in your desire to make certain that the two become one and the same" (p. 8). Analyzing oneself through a variety of methods is an important aspect of defining oneself as a teacher. A teacher who questions the status quo is a teacher in the process of attempting to understand the whole of teaching. In order to "develop and shape your occupational identity it is important for you to be constantly critical and reflective about that which is presented to you and that which has been omitted. You need to filter all that is offered to you through your own priorities" (p. 16).

Reflection allows a teacher to learn more about the self. Self-knowledge helps a teacher identify priorities. The teacher, like her students, assumes the role the of learner. Her new role involves her in the process of learning which, in turn, can lead to the development of a relationship with her students that now has an added ingredient of empathy. The teacher and the students have learning in common. Through reflection a teacher can become empowered to make choices that affect curriculum and further professional growth, and also help define her role in the larger school community.

Anna Richert in her article, "Using Teacher Cases For Reflection and Enhanced Understanding" (1989), echoes much of what Grant and Zeichner think in terms of the importance of reflection and how it places teachers in the role of learner. "Teachers must learn to learn from their changing experiences in the schools" (p.1). While Richert's research focuses specifically on case study, her ideas can be directly applied to journal writing.

Richert (1989) believes that teachers need time to reflect on their experiences in the classroom. She states the following:

> Like other professionals teachers need to be able to continue learning about their work if they are to meet the rapidly changing demands of their work. Good teaching does not rest on a set of static, prescribed rules and teaching strategies. Rather, shifting circumstances suggest teachers be reflective in their approach to classroom practice. Reflective teachers approach teaching as problem solving; they see teaching circumstances and conditions as problematic rather than given, and approach each situation with an openness to both the known and the unknown. (p. 3)

Reflection can lead to a change in action. One is afforded time to contemplate a course of action. This reflection gives the practitioner the opportunity to look more carefully at her actions and to decide if her present perspective is broad enough. A teacher can take the time to encompass the complexities of the situation. Reflection allows teachers to see teaching as a process instead of a pre-determined set of actions and behaviors. Teachers and other adults involved with children and learning must keep in mind that learning is a process fraught with frustration. People learn at different rates and with varying degrees of success. Viewing yourself as both teacher and learner can lead to an open-mindedness which Dewey (1933) felt was essential for transformation through reflection to occur.

In her article, "Critical Reflection of Teaching: Insights from Freire, "Freema Elbaz (1988) states: "Reflecting on one's work is not ordinarily a part of teaching. Recently, however, self-reflection is proposed more and more as an important ingredient... of teaching" (p.38).

In addition to aiding a teacher in gaining self-knowledge, reflection can lead to transformation. In his article, "Developing and Sustaining Critical Reflection in Teacher Education," John Smyth (1989) states that "Requiring that teachers develop a sense of personal biography and professional history is one way of having them begin to overcome their inertia and unwillingness to question where particular teaching practices came from" (p. 4). He sees autobiography as another tool for reflection, one that can lead a teacher towards self-knowledge. As a result of self-knowledge, teachers can move towards empowerment. According to Smyth, (1989):

> The notion of empowerment ... has to do with teachers taking charge of aspects of their lives over which they have been prevented from gaining access in the past... There is a sense in which people who do this embark on a process to becoming different. (p. 5)

The issue of transformation is a central theme of Smyth's work. He believes that as a result of self-knowledge a teacher can begin to gain control of various aspects of her professional life. Self-knowledge can lead to transformation. For example, the idea that a teacher has a history that affects her teaching can aid a teacher in seeing herself as a dynamic variable in the classroom. This is a different image from that of a teacher as someone who merely imparts knowledge. Seeing a teacher as an individual with a past, present, and future is a very important and exciting concept (Clandinin and Connelly, 1988).

According to C. T. Patrick Diamond (1991), "What we know as teachers is grounded both in our personal assumptions and in those that are socially shared" (p.14). If one agrees with Diamond's idea that personal histories affect teachers' performance in the classroom then as educators we need to look more closely at ourselves. Diamond also believes that "All teachers must inevitably acknowledge that they see the world of the classroom from a center lying within themselves " (p.18). Diamond suggests that in order to make education better, we need each individual teacher to explore her own experience and how it affects her teaching. He believes that journal writing, autobiography, narrative and other reflective tools, can move a teacher towards self-knowledge.

Similarly, Gary Knowles, Andra L. Cole and Collen S. Presswood authors of the book Through Preservice Teachers' Eyes (1994) view journal writing as a powerful tool for the practitioner.

> The power in journal writing within the context of learning to teach is primarily located in its usefulness for recording your reactions to schools, classrooms, teachers and students. Also, it offers a place to explore the planning and outcomes of your curricular, instructional, relational, and classroom management activities. It is a good place to record your reactions to some of the pervasive and central issues surrounding education ... The scope of your journal writing is only limited by the contexts in which you are working, the time you have available, your foci, and your energies. (p. 31)

Journal writing is valued by many researchers today and is gaining status as a tool for professional development. Writing provides the participant with several areas of focus as well as the flexibility of setting different goals. Journals are just one of the tools that a teacher can use to access "personal practical knowledge." The focus of this study is to see how journal writing led to a change in my practice as a classroom teacher.

Methodology

The following chapter consists of a discussion of the methodology used for this study. This is a self-study that utilizes qualitative methodology and more specifically is an example of Action Research. Most researchers design their methodology before collecting their data, but my study called for a different approach. Developing the methodology for my study was a process that developed over time. The idea of keeping a professional journal came from my desire to merge my practice of journal keeping with my desire to grow professionally as well as fulfilling a requirement for my Masters of Education Degree.

I began my study by exploring literature related to education, philosophy, psychology, anthropology, writing, autobiography, narrative and feminism. The range of my reading reflects my desire to place the process of self-reflection within a broad academic context. I continued my literature review throughout the entire length of my project which has been two and a half years. I began to take field notes on my classroom practice in the fall of 1992. Nightly I responded to my field notes in a journal which I refer to as field text. In the Spring of 1993 I divided my journal into categories. These categories are explained in detail in this chapter. I spent a lot of time reading and rereading my field text. I also began a journal documenting the process of becoming a teacher as researcher. I begin my methodology chapter with a discussion of the type of research I engaged in: action research. This discussion is then followed by a further discussion of related topics such as naturalistic inquiry, the role of objectivity and subjectivity, ethnography, narrative, "personal practical knowledge," metaphor and the research site.

Action Research: Teacher as Researcher

The most common type of action research uses the collaborative model in which the teacher in conjunction with the researcher observes, questions and learns. Problems in the classroom are seen as questions to be investigated and everything in the classroom is considered data. In traditional educational research the teacher often has little influence or involvement in the study, while in action research the teacher has the dual role of researcher and teacher. In her new role the teacher is in a position of power and influence.

Her ideas are important and play a vital role in the research. She develops a stake in the research and is personally involved. Karen Teel (1989) states the following in her article "Teacher as Researcher":

> The idea behind the teacher as researcher movement is that in terms of classroom research no one could be in a better position to investigate the teaching and learning processes than the teachers themselves. They spend hours and hours with their students, becoming familiar with their attitudes, responses, and behavior vis a vis the tasks they are assigned. (p.7)

As stated earlier the most common type of action research is collaborative research. Self-study is another aspect of action research that involves the documentation of the practice of teaching by the teacher herself. This study falls in the later category: self-study.

Naturalistic Inquiry

Research falls into one of two categories: qualitative or quantitative. My field study is a qualitative self-study. In the book, Ethnography and the Qualitative Design in Educational Research (1986) edited by Goetz and LeCompte, Guba and Lincoln, in their article, "Naturalistic Inquiry" (1985), state that ethnography is a methodology that seeks to observe, record and describe in great detail a specific social scene. In education the scene is most likely a school or a classroom. The goal of the observation, in the form of field notes, is to collect direct quotes and describe the actions, behaviors, and feelings of those being observed. The ethnographer seeks to understand in depth the motivations of those being studied. She seeks to completely describe the subject or subjects of inquiry through a narrative description. Ethnography is a "process, a way of studying human life, as well as a first hand sensory account of phenomena " (p. 21).

The Researcher: The Role of Objectivity and Subjectivity

An important aspect of ethnographic methodology is the role of the researcher. Michael Quinn Patton (1987) states that "Closeness does not make bias and loss of perspective, inevitable: distance is not a guarantee of objectivity. The mandate of qualitative methods is go into the field and learn about the program firsthand"(p. 17). As Patton points out, distance does not guarantee objectivity. The researcher's feelings, attitudes and philosophy can greatly influence what she takes notice of or how a particular event is interpreted. In fact, in many instances the "Validity in qualitative methods hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the evaluator because the observer is the instrument "(p. 17).

In this study I am both the researcher and the object of inquiry, so the issue of objectivity and subjectivity is important and needs to be addressed. According to Patton, (1987) "Data that can be measured by numbers and easily duplicated can be narrow in its scope and effectiveness, especially when applied to a study that involves a teacher or teachers" (p. 17). Patton also believes, that "Quantitative methods ... use standardized measures that fit diverse various opinions and experience into predetermined response categories" (p.18). I think that it is incorrect to assume that a researcher can be completely objective or even that objectivity is a desirable goal in all educational studies. Quantitative methodology limits the vision of the researcher and allows very little room for viewing the teacher as a person. When investigating issues related to education, it is important to have a broad vision that encompasses all the facets of education.

In many educational studies involving classrooms, the teacher's beliefs, values, and experiences are not considered a factor in the research study. In the past the researcher did not record the personal, subjective experience of the teacher, and in fact, often denied the inner, personal world of the teacher and its effects on classroom practice. Fortunately this educational research trend is changing.

In their book Classroom Practice Teacher: Images in Action (1986), Connelly and Clandinin offer the following explanation for the lack of value placed on teachers' personal experiential knowledge.

> Her experience becomes important only in understanding how she fulfills external demands, but this lack of research can be attributed to a view of what constitutes valid knowledge. Knowledge is seen as the possession of experts. The experiential knowledge of teachers in not acknowledged. Teachers are viewed as possessing experience, but not knowledge. (p.3)

In contrast, ethnography addresses the totality of a particular situation. Ethnography aspires to describe a specific scene in detail. It should be a goal-free exploration; however, it is still limited by the fact that another person records and interprets the data. This is the point at which this study varies from traditional ethnographic methodology. This study is a self-ethnography, a form of action research in which I am both the researcher and the object of inquiry.

Narrative

My study is not only a self-ethnography, but a narrative, a story about my practice as a classroom teacher. Therefore the methodology surrounding the analysis of stories is an important aspect of my study. Essentially my reflection on practice emerges as a story with recurrent themes and patterns. Narrative tells a story. Creating stories allow the author to give meaning to experience. In their book Teachers As Curriculum Planners Connelly and Clandinin (1988) see narrative as a way for teachers to understand themselves as well as other teachers.

> We tell stories about ourselves that are historical, explanatory, and foretelling of the future. ... Narrative is a kind of idea that permits us to think of the whole. ...Narrative is the study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure and create purpose in the future. (p.24)

Meaning is derived through the telling and retelling of stories. Meaning allows one to understand the past which may lead to changes in future practices. Stories become a rich and accessible way to understand

ourselves and our values. Each story has many personal beliefs embedded in the narrative. Writing and finding significance in our stories allows one to understand oneself as well as understanding others. The reasons for our actions become clearer. It gives us an opportunity to explore our motives and actions (Connelly and Clandinin, 1992).

Clandinin and Connelly (1992) also believe that educational reform will occur when we see teachers as an essential part of the whole of education. " ... teachers are the single most important force in school improvement"(p.4). Often teachers' personal and professional histories are not acknowledged as influential. Teachers are viewed solely in terms of the role they play.

It is important for teachers to see and explore their personal frameworks that affect teaching in such a profound way. Our reasons for teaching also affect our practice. Our values and beliefs are embedded in many of our choices. For example, if I value a multi-cultural perspective, then this belief will be reflected in my choice of curriculum. Teachers' personal values are evident not only in their curriculum choices, but also in their actions in the classroom. Therefore, it is important to identify these factors that affect life in the classroom.

In the book, Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning To Teach (1991) Deborah Britzman states: "Learning to teach is not a mere matter of applying decontextualized skills or mirroring predetermined images; it is a time when one's past, present and future are set in dynamic tension. Learning to teach is always the process of becoming" (p.15). This attitude is very different from a more traditional view of teaching, and some may think that personal development is not related to teaching. I believe that one's personal development is essential to good teaching. When a teacher walks into a classroom, she brings her values, beliefs, and personal philosophy all of which affect life in the classroom and therefore it is essential for teachers to engage in the process of reflection.

"Personal Practical Knowledge"

Identification of "personal practical knowledge" emerges out of the study of narrative. In the book Teachers as Curriculum Planners, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) state that "personal practical knowledge" is a "Term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers

as knowledgeable knowing persons" (p.25). In accordance with this perspective the teacher is seen as a person with her own philosophy on both education and life. According to Clandinin "personal practical knowledge" emerges from the analysis and interpretation of data. She and her colleagues have done extensive research in aiding teachers to use tools of reflection for the acquisition of this type of knowledge. These tools of reflection are referred to as part of personal experience methodology. The analysis of personal philosophy, autobiography, stories, or journals are all ways in which a teacher can access her "personal practical knowledge."

Personal philosophy embodies values, beliefs, and opinions. Clandinin and Connelly (1988) define personal philosophy in the following way:

> Personal philosophy is a way one thinks about oneself in a teaching situation. Personal philosophy has within it a notion of beliefs and values... personal philosophy goes beneath the surface manifestations of values and belief... Personal philosophy refers to a reconstruction of meaning contained in a teacher's actions and his or her exploration of them expressed in the form of narrative experience. (p. 66)

Analysis of metaphor is another aspect of personal experience methodology. "Metaphor is principally a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding" (p. 3). Metaphors play an essential role in teachers' learning about themselves. In the book, Metaphors We Live By (1980) George Lakoff and Mark Johnson describe the role and function of metaphor.

> Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but in thought and action. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system is largely metaphorical. The essence of metaphor is to understand the meaning and significance of our personal metaphors. These metaphors are formed by our past and present experiences. Once we can identify our experiences as entities or substances, we can refer to them, categorize them and, by this means reason them out. (p. 3)

According to Lakoff and Johnson people understand their world through metaphor. These metaphors can be used not only to better understand the self, but to better understand our choices related to education.

In Chapter Two, the Literature Review, the importance of self-reflection and how it can lead to transformation was addressed. In this chapter I have addressed the issues related to my choice of methodology. The rest of this chapter will describe the specific methodology I employed in my self-study.

Research Site: The School Community

Highland is a school that serves a multi-cultural community. There are five hundred and ten students. Highland is an elementary school with grades Kindergarten through Six. During the last five years there has been an increase in the number of students who have been born in other countries or whose parents are from another country. Many of these students come to school with very little exposure to English and are therefore considered to be second language learners. The majority of Highland students are from a low socioeconomic background and therefore considered educationally disadvantaged. For example, 80 percent of parents qualify for a federally funded lunch program. In addition ninety percent of the students are designated Chapter One which means they scored below the average percentile on state achievement tests. Like many inner-city schools there have been incidents of vandalism, theft and violence. Unfortunately, there has been a marked increase in gang participation among Highland students.

Despite several administration and staff changes there remains a core of dedicated teachers who organize and implement special programs and events. There is strong sense that students are an important part of the success of the school. Students are encouraged to participate in a myriad of activities. There is also an emphasis on encouraging self-esteem and this is reflected in the choice of curriculum and activities.

The Field Study/ Ethnography of Practice

During the fall of 1992 I gathered my data. My class consisted of thirty-one students both grades three and four. My classroom was comprised of the following ethnic groups: African American, Vietnamese, Latin American, Mexican, Indian, Laotian, Mien, and Thai. The majority of the students were second language learners. I also had three Special Education students for whom we implemented a Full-Inclusion Model. The special students spent the entire day in the classroom and became accepted members of the class. The Special Education teacher and I planned and implemented curriculum together. The focus of the curriculum was social studies with an emphasis on hands-on activities. The special students also had a full-time aide who assisted them in activities and interacted with the other students as well. The full-inclusion model was not a static model, but instead was in-flux and required an open, flexible attitude. I believe that flexibility is a critical quality for teachers to develop; it is important to adapt to what is actually occurring in the classroom. Listening to students is fundamental to effective learning. I also worked hard to create a positive learning environment and engaged my students in a variety of high interest activities. A feeling of community permeated the class.

The Classroom

My students sat at tables in groups of four. These groups functioned as cooperative learning groups. The groups were changed every six weeks. Often students self-selected groups according to the curriculum. I did not object to this, but instead was pleased that they felt comfortable enough to seek others out. During some activities I did insist that students stay in their assigned groups, but as the year progressed my insistence decreased. There was a feeling of community among the students.

During the duration of my research the classroom was located in a portable classroom while the entire school was under renovation.

Field Notes/ Journal/ Field Text

I began my research for my field study on September 1, 1992.

I took field notes every school day until December 15, 1992 using a three subject spiral notebook. I recorded classroom activities, student behavior, and my feelings related to these subjects, as well as other topics. Occasionally I found the process of taking field notes to be cumbersome and felt split between teaching and recording classroom activity. Sometimes my notes were detailed while at other times they consisted of a few words which served to evoke the memory of an incident or a feeling upon later review.

Each night I would read my field notes at least twice. I would then sit down at my computer and respond to the notes. Sometimes I responded directly to the field notes, and at other times the field notes would trigger other ideas or feelings. My journal entries ranged from one to five pages. I refer to the combination of the field notes and the journal as my field text. My field text consists of one hundred and seventeen single spaced pages.

I read through my field text ten times looking for common themes and patterns. I took theoretical memos in the margin based on the text and second level analysis began to emerge (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988). Upon each reading the themes, patterns, and ideas became clearer. I began to see similar subjects appear repeatedly.

In February of 1993, two months after my research, I divided the field text into the following categories: rhythm, classroom organization, students, self-esteem, classroom discipline, health, effects of stress, paperwork, parents, resources, other roles, type of class, curriculum themes, math, and a general file that consisted of journal entries that overlapped into several categories.

After I did this I read through each file. The size of the file reflected the urgency and level of importance of the topic. There was a significant amount of ideas and concerns evident in the field text but, the theme of rhythm emerged as the most important one. I decided to look more closely at this important aspect of teaching because it was an area that I was having a lot of problems with and had very strong feelings about. A metaphor related to the subject of rhythm also emerged and an analysis of this metaphor is included in this study.

Most field studies follow a prescribed methodology. The researcher begins the research with a specific goal and employs the methodology in order to answer the question. I began my field study with a review of the literature related to my topic, but found myself wandering into areas such as feminism, anthropology, philosophy and psychology. I believe that the literature review

process is not always straightforward, but instead is a process of exploration. As I read articles and books related to my topic I found my focus changing. I found the literature review to be a process of discovery.

In order to maintain a focus to my study, I began writing in a journal about the process of being a teacher-researcher. I also took notes on a tape recorder to further focus myself. At other times I found myself taking notes on taking notes. Sometimes I found myself boxed in my own mind. At other times I became frustrated because the reflection was often difficult and tedious. Nevertheless I found the process invaluable. I strongly believe that reflection can lead to transformation. The following chapter is an analysis of my data that provides an example of reflection leading to transformation.

Results

Rhythm emerged as a central theme from my field text. After making theoretical notes in the margins I categorized the field notes into the following categories: rhythm, classroom organization, students, self-esteem, classroom discipline, health, effects of stress, paperwork, parents, resources, other roles, type of class, curriculum themes, math and entries that overlapped into two or more categories. The rhythm file was the largest file, and in the file labeled "overlapping" many of the entries related to rhythm. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1988), "Rhythm is another way of understanding the syntax of our language of practice. Teaching rhythms form part of our personal practical knowledge. Rhythm is an expression of some part of the narrative unity arising out our past" (p.76). Rhythm also refers to our style, and our patterns in the classroom. Establishing a rhythm in the classroom is an issue for many teachers, and many factors influence the rhythm of a classroom teacher. In this study, an examination of data (field text) revealed factors contributing to my rhythm in the classroom. This study shows how reflection led to a change in my practice as a classroom teacher.

My field text consisted of one hundred and seventeen pages. I chose the following journal entries because they are a representative sample of my thoughts on my classroom rhythm.

Throughout the field text the reader can see evidence of the change in my attitude and approach to the issue of my rhythm in the classroom. In the early entries I express difficulty finding my rhythm; a desire to change emerges in the later entries, followed by evidence of a change in action related to my rhythm. I believe this transformation is a result of writing about and reflecting upon my rhythm in the classroom.

My personal philosophy which served as the foundation of my action is evident in the field text. My personal philosophy embodies my values, beliefs and opinions. This philosophy in turn affected my rhythm and the reasons I wanted to make changes in my classroom rhythm. It was through the process of reflection that I came to understand my personal philosophy and how it relates to my classroom.

My field text reveals my own values and chronicles their impact on my practice as a teacher. I believe that keeping and analyzing a journal has given me a keener awareness of my own personal philosophy as well as my

philosophy related to education. This in turn has led me to make curriculum choices and other crucial decisions related to teaching. This Field Study has given me invaluable insights into my practice of teaching. The following journal entries and subsequent analysis use words borrowed from psychology. The meaning of these words is self evident and can be understood in context. The language of the field text is colloquial, not academic and reflects the style of the writer.

JOURNAL 1: September 2, 1992

> Goal: Let the class happen and do not get panicked about the future and take it easy and the information that I need will come to me.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

When I say "and the information will come to me," I mean that the students' academic and social needs will become evident over time. I am suggesting that as a teacher I have a plethora of experience and curriculum knowledge to draw from in order to meet the needs of the students. Many teachers have extensive curriculum knowledge, but limited access to the curriculum itself. In this case access refers to the ability to locate and organize curriculum. Teachers often have more than enough curriculum available to them, but are unable to easily locate it. When they do locate curriculum it often takes time to read and then implement it.

Another problem related to curriculum is that teachers often do not take into account the vital role that students play in the successful implementation of curriculum. Curriculum does not succeed unless the students are interested. The students' prior knowledge of a subject is an essential part of learning. Teachers must be aware of their students prior experience and fill in the gaps

when necessary. Many lesson plans now include a discussion of prior knowledge and direct the teacher to evoke stories of past experiences, but *more emphasis is needed*. We learn through making connections and prior knowledge provides the student with different avenues through which to find these connections.

Journal entry 1 also suggests the importance of trust. This trust alludes to the image of students' guiding me, and implies the idea that students have a voice or valued opinion in the classroom. The idea of the importance of students' voices is paramount in my teaching. The idea of voice suggests that people have the opportunity to become actively involved in a given process. Individuals are encouraged to explore their own feelings and opinions, and to express these ideas to others. The idea that students have a voice which needs to be cultivated seems a given, but I know that this is not true. In fact, the educational methodology of transmission is based on the concept that the teacher is the person with knowledge, and that the students are supposed to sit passively and absorb information. Although the authors of the California State Framework: Language Arts (1987) urge a move towards cooperative learning, most classroom still reflect a more traditional approach to learning. The authors of the framework promote the idea, that hands on learning, which involves the students directly in curriculum, is preferred to the model where the student plays a passive role by merely sitting quietly and absorbing the lesson. I think that this model discourages student involvement and instead promotes passivity. My own experience in school has been one of frustration because I was not encouraged to voice my opinion, and in fact penalized when I chose to share my opinions. My own experience has led me to hold certain values, one of which is that students must be encouraged to voice their opinions and concerns. We need to encourage students to share their experiences in a myriad of ways. Students want to feel that they have something valuable to contribute. This in turn leads to higher self-esteem which is directly related to school achievement.

Trust is an important concept to me and begins with self-trust and then extends to my students. I also need to trust that I have sufficient curriculum knowledge and the ability to continually expand my knowledge base and to disseminate this information. I need to trust that my students will provide me with feedback which may lead to changes in curriculum. I believe that

students need to be an integral part of the process of teaching, not just passive receivers of knowledge and information.

Believing and trusting in myself is fundamental to my functioning as a teacher. When I have a lot of doubts, it is essential to explore them. Sometimes my doubts are related to my lack of information regarding a specific topic, which leads me to further academic research. At other times my doubts cause me to examine my methodology. Sometimes my doubts cause me to frantically seek out the perfect curriculum. At other times my doubt is generated by my own insecurity. This insecurity can cloud my teaching. Doubts and other feelings serve as vital sign posts and lead to questioning which in turn leads to reflection and growth and should be viewed as signals which lead to a search for self-knowledge. The analysis of my doubts gives me a system to examine and re-examine myself and my work as a teacher.

The words "let the class happen" express my belief that a natural changing process occurs in the classroom. There is a flow which is important to my teaching. When I refer to "flow" I mean that my students and I are interacting and responding continuously to each other. This flow is in response to what is occurring in my classroom as well as outside in the larger school community. I have repeatedly found myself reacting and responding to outside pressures. For example, I carry the ideas and goals of the California State Framework around in my head, and I am constantly reminding myself of what my students should know. While I think it is important to know the educational goals of the state, I find that it causes me undue stress. At times, I begin to feel panic, thinking that I need to increase the speed of the dissemination of knowledge in order to reach the goals stated in the framework. My students, like many others, may need extra time to comprehend lessons, but because I feel the need to cover everything in the textbook or the framework I may disregard my students' needs. This pressure causes me to feel alienated from my students, and I begin to feel that I doing an inadequate job. I begin to see my students as objects, receptacles of information. In response to this feeling of panic, I feel compelled to increase the amount of information I give to my students. My rhythm is then altered. I speed up to the point where I am frustrated and alienated from my true beliefs about students, learning, and education. Regaining confidence in myself, my students, and our relationship becomes mired in feelings of inadequacy. In practical terms this leads me to try to rush my students from one activity to

another, never allowing them to learn in a low anxiety environment. At this point, I am no longer listening to their needs. The classroom experience becomes very unpleasant.

One of the reasons the expectations articulated in the State Framework cause me to feel anxiety is that my students are mostly English as a Second Language learners. They can not possibly learn what is expected to be covered, and, in fact there is no way any teacher could adequately meet these expectations. And yet these expectations weigh heavily on many teachers and serve as constant reminder of one's own inadequacies.

JOURNAL 2: September 3, 1992

> I need to let my creativity go in order to get into teaching these students. I need to relax and approach it in a very relaxed, simple way. I know that I have been feeling a lot of a anxiety in relationship to this class and I need to let go. I have a lot of background knowledge and I must allow it to aid me in my planning.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

My own creativity is a vital part of teaching. When I am creative, I am at my best. This creativity emerges when I feel comfortable with the subject matter and my presentation of it.

My desire to relax and approach teaching in a natural way finds expression throughout my journal entries. If I could just be calmer, more relaxed, and in tune with my students, then I would spend less time reacting to my fears and about the direction of the curriculum and the amount to be covered. I constantly struggle to see my own students in the curriculum. They are not just some unimportant entity out there, they are my students, the reason I am teaching.

JOURNAL 3: September 4, 1992

> I need to really slow down when I talk to my students. It is going to be hard to be the one talking so much. I am going to really get them talking to each other and also getting music and other modes of learning going. I can not and do not want to be the center of the class.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

The concept most linked to my rhythm in the classroom is slowing down. This is especially important because for the last two years I have been working primarily with English As A Second Language students. Current language acquisition theory states that a student must be interested in the message contained in the language. The message must be meaningful to the student. This does not mean that I simply repeat words loudly, but instead that I use a lot of visuals and that I try several different modes of presenting information. My students have been a gift to me in terms of my own personal development. Their special language circumstances have forced me to slow down and really consider their unique language position.

Clandinin discusses this concept of an educative relationship in her article, "Telling Teachers Stories" (1992), I strongly agree with her ideas on this topic. I am in an educative relationship with people. Because I care about my students, I am motivated to change. My efforts to be a better teacher and, ultimately, a better person are prompted by my desire to succeed as a teacher. Teaching has led me to change because I care so much about my students. Teaching also fulfills my desire to be of service. I am making a conscious choice to work with low income urban students. The desire to be of service is related to my personal beliefs about poverty. As a result of working in an urban school, I have learned a great deal about the problems of poverty and just how pervasive its affects are on both adults and children.

Another important aspect of my rhythm is that I need to create an environment in which my students feel comfortable; this is especially true for second language learners and high risk students. The term used by some is affective filter. When a student's affective filter is high, his anxiety level is high and this, in turn interferes with his ability to learn.

JOURNAL 4: September 8, 1992

This year I feel like slowing down in terms of homework.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

My early journal entries often focus on slowing down and developing lessons and concepts in more detail. Allowing the students many opportunities and methods to approach knowledge is very important. Not all students learn the same way and at the same rate. I start the year with a desire to purposely slow down. I know I have a tendency to speed up and this becomes counter-productive.

JOURNAL 5: September 12, 1992

The pace with this class is so different than with my last year's class. It is going to take some time for me to get into the rhythm.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

This is evidence of the difficulty I am having with finding my rhythm with the class. I start the year with the memory of last years class. I am aware of the challenge I have ahead of me in terms of finding the right pace and rhythm. This issue of finding the right rhythm becomes a challenge.

JOURNAL 6: September 23, 1992

I am still having a lot of difficulty with my timing. Things take so much longer. I know this keeps coming up and I guess it is going to take some time

for me to get used to all of this (ESL) methodology. I also need to remember that I have mostly third graders and they are at a whole different developmental stage then my fourth graders.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

At this point I am beginning to realize that third graders are very different from fourth graders, and I can see the importance of adjusting to the change. The idea of adjusting to my students is fundamental. When faced with a challenge, I look to myself first. I try to examine what I am doing and what I need to do in order to remedy the situation. Perhaps this concept of adjusting to my students is related to my philosophy that I can change my reaction and my methodology a lot easier than I can change students. This is not to say that I do not encourage changes in my students, but that I look to myself first. I think that this is an essential component of good teaching. Fortunately, more research is being done which puts focus on the teacher as a person with a past, present and future. In their book Teachers as Curriculum Planners: Narratives of Experience , Clandinin and Connelly (1988), discuss this in great detail and re-define what curriculum is. They see curriculum as a relationship between students, teachers, knowledge and information. They see the relationship in a historical context and also in terms of a continuum.

JOURNAL 7: September 30, 1992

> I realize that I need to let my creativity go and let things happen more and take advantage of the background knowledge I have. I need to trust that I will be able to create an environment in which these students feel good about themselves and feel good about learning and reading.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

I place great emphasis on making students feel comfortable and safe. If students feel intimated they will not learn. I try very hard to model making mistakes and seeing learning as a fun process, not something to be dreaded or feared.

JOURNAL 8: October 1, 1992

I need to be open and flexible.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

This statement is an example of a core belief and philosophy which I have about education and life. I believe that being flexible is essential. So much happens in a classroom, and if you have a rigid stance, then there will always be something that causes you to get out of balance. I know that some teachers are rigid; by this I mean that they have a definite idea about how things should be, regardless of the actual situation. I prefer to model flexibility and adaptability. In terms of employment, being flexible is essential. In the modern world being flexible is an invaluable asset. I did not start out teaching this way, but my experiences in the classroom have shown me that being flexible is essential. I attempt to encourage flexibility through my approach to social as well as academic problems and challenges.

Along with flexibility comes openness: openness to students' personalities, and openness to new and different curriculum. At my school site this is crucial. Working in a high risk environment demands that one be flexible in relation to what is going on with and around the students. They are affected by many problems and situations that only residents of the community are accustomed to. Their experiences differ significantly from those of most teachers and therefore it is essential that teachers listen to the stories and experiences of the students.

We need to listen to students. Their experiences have shaped their personalities and their ability or inability to learn. Their desires, needs, and values are shaped by their experiences. As teachers, we need to become good listeners. This is an area in which I feel I continue to improve in. If I listen to

my students they can guide me. It is important for me to recognize that they have many things of value to share and that they can teach me as well.

JOURNAL 9: October 5, 1992

> The students are pretty mellow which is nice for a Monday. If the kids were to have a rowdy day then Monday is the best one because it is one of the few days I have energy. At the end of the week I am so tired that it is difficult to function.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

It seems that over the last five years each of my classes has had one day in which they have had a lot more energy. On this particular day they all seem to be having a difficult time settling down. It is true that on Monday I have more energy stored up from the weekend. This aspect of rhythm affects my teaching. It is always a challenge to maintain my energy throughout the week. I find that I have to pay special attention to exercise, diet, and my sleep patterns. I think that an area of teacher education that needs to be explored is the amount and type of energy that a teacher needs to have. I know that when I eat right and exercise, my teaching day goes a lot better. Fortunately, I have also found some ways to release stress and this has a great deal to do with my effectiveness as a teacher. I remember feeling a sense of panic during my first semester in my credential program. It was at this moment that I realized just how much energy I was going to be expending. One of the other issues evident in my journal is stress, and my feelings, reactions, and coping mechanisms related to it.

JOURNAL 10: October 12, 1992

> I start the year with the memory of the class before and I am aware of the challenge I have ahead of me in terms of finding the right pace. This issue of rhythm becomes a challenge. I have a good idea of the ideal rhythm, but it is not coming right away.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

In this passage I express my frustration about my difficulty in finding the correct rhythm with the class. It is only the third week of class and I feel like I have already had enough time to establish my rhythm. In my teaching, I sometimes get impatient with my own growth and inability to deal with certain situations. I grow impatient if I can't find an immediate solution to a problem. I can't expect to slow down with my class if I can not give myself time to work out a solution to a problem. Just as I need to relax and let go of my class, I also need to relax about problems I face in the classroom. The pressure I apply to myself is counter-productive.

JOURNAL 11: October 19, 1992

> The kids were all wired up and so now they are doing cursive and that always slows kids down and I am glad that I did it because they are really out of it-for them. I also noticed that I did not give out any super slips (positive reinforcement tool) and there may be a relationship between their behavior and the lack of positive reinforcement. I need to really make sure that I keep up the positive reinforcement and really use it because I was getting angry in the afternoon and I did not need to do this. I need to

change the mood and give super slips and have drawings and not get angry.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

This entry is an example of how I did not successfully adjust to the students' mood; instead of seeing and understanding where they were in terms of behavior, I got angry. I need to remember to use the tools available to me. Sometimes I get caught up in my own anger and frustration and forget to use positive reinforcement tools. At times I want to change the students' behavior, but I need to remain focused.

My anger is an indication of frustration. This is a clue for me to stop and rethink what is going on in the classroom. Sometimes I walk to the door and just stand for a few minutes; at other times I do yoga with the students and this gives me some time to calm myself down. Coping with anger and frustration presents a great challenge in many jobs, and especially in teaching. Teachers need to identify what triggers their own anger, as well as find constructive ways to deal with anger, whatever its source. I believe this is important because teachers, like others, need to act responsibly in regards to their anger. Mis-directed anger can cause harm to others. Children are especially sensitive to anger. They often feel responsible for the feelings and problems of the adults in their lives. I believe that successful teachers reflect on practice and personal growth is an integral part of teaching.

JOURNAL 12: October 21, 1992

I feel like I need to have a calmer voice in the classroom and I need to just keep the energy mellow.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

I think that tone and volume are important in the classroom. This is especially challenging for me because I tend have a lot of energy and get

excited about things. I have to work hard to remain calm, but at the same time, maintain my enthusiasm. At times I feel like I am trying to be something I am not, but over time I have grown to see the importance of making the adjustment of maintaining a calm voice which in fact improves the rhythm of the classroom experience.

JOURNAL 13: October 29, 1992

> I had a real problem getting them to settle down. I need to do some writing or something else that gets them focused. They are writing now and they are doing fine. They really like writing. I am glad that they do.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

I can see the importance of finding and using activities that calm students down when they need it. Oftentimes, these activities occur in response to their needs. At times I fight the messages they are sending me. I want to plow through the activities I have planned. I become frustrated and then all the fears, doubts, and anxieties about how behind we are start swirling in my head. These counter-productive thoughts only interfere with my rhythm and I have to work to eradicate them. I often ask myself, what is the goal I am trying to accomplish? What is the action which will produce the best effect? What is the most effective method at this point?

JOURNAL 14: November 4, 1992

> In a way I want to tell them to move on with their work, but they get mad when I do not give them enough time to finish. It is the

> same thing that keeps coming up-the struggle between what I think I should be doing and what in actuality is happening. That is where the problem lies. It is all the "shoulds." These messages are in my head and they affect my teaching.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

In this journal entry, I clearly state the problem of finding my rhythm. My students let me know that they need more time. I think it is great that my students feel comfortable expressing their desire for more time, and I respond to them. I am very aware of the current struggle in my head. It is the "shoulds" of teaching versus what the students need and want. I want to respond to and respect their desires and work to deal with the thoughts that float in my head and have such an effect on my teaching.

At this point some transformation is occurring; I am aware of the issue of rhythm and I am consciously, knowingly holding myself back. I am beginning to follow the flow of my students instead of imposing my own timing on them.

JOURNAL 15: November 6, 1992

> This week seemed to go on for so long and everyone seemed so tired. It was amazing feeling so tired and unable to accept how tired I was. It was really difficult, but at least and actually-this is a very important fact-I do not need to fight the kids in order for them to learn. They are learning on their own and fighting for more writing time or more time to complete projects. It is amazing how much they want to learn.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

I am adjusting to my students instead of making them adjust to me. I value listening to the students, and the above journal entries show that indeed I am beginning to make a change. I am listening to them and giving them status in the classroom, instead of discounting their desires and needs.

I do not need to fight with these kids for them to learn. They want to learn; in fact, they let me know what they want to do and how much time they require. I am glad that they feel comfortable asking me for more time. I need to be aware of how long projects take and adjust when needed. It is essential that I listen to what they are saying. I think that one of the most important roles of the teacher is to inspire students to learn on their own and to become self-directed learners. It is important for students to become actively involved in their own education.

JOURNAL 16: November 9, 1992

> The kids are writing and I feel like there is so much to do and a part of me wants to jump in and move to another subject, but I need to back off and let them do what they are doing and not jump in and that is really hard for me.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

I am very aware of my internal struggle, wanting to push my students, but also of needing to pull back and let them do their work. There is a change occurring here: I am consciously holding back even though it is obviously very difficult to do so. Holding back means turning away from the voices that tell me to hurry to the next subject, and listening to the students' voices instead.

Students are the key to the whole relationship; their needs and desires should be considered when making decisions about curriculum and the amount of time that we will spend on any one project.

JOURNAL 17: November 13, 1992

Alice is in the room and she had the kids do the points (positive reinforcement tool) and the thinking cap (an exercise which calms the students down). Although they say they do not like it, it is a good for them and mellows them out.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

The Brain Gym (a series of exercises developed to help focus) is a really good method. It helps the students to focus, especially during transitions between activities. I hope that they learn to use some of these techniques on their own.

JOURNAL 18: November 16, 1992

> They are a little too hyper for me and the whole school seems this way and I really hate it and I guess I need to work to get them calmed down and that is not going to be easy.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

Sometimes the whole school has the same feeling of total chaos and craziness. When they are all "hyper" and the rest of the school is this way I just need to accept it and provide appropriate outlets. This is not to say that I give in to their desire to be hyper, but sometimes it is best not to fight the feeling of the class. Sometimes when I struggle to control them, it only backfires. Following the energy of the students and making alternative arrangements in terms of curriculum can be the best response. My journal shows evidence of a true acceptance of the reality of teaching. My philosophy of following the students is actually beginning to work as I relax more with the natural rhythm of the relationship between myself, the students, and the curriculum.

JOURNAL 19: November 18, 1992

> I can not believe how quickly this year is going. It is amazing how quickly the year moves.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

The longer I am in teaching, the faster the year seems to go. I am always amazed at this phenomenon. The year starts slowly and then it accelerates so quickly. Sometimes I do not feel like I can really keep up with the pace. Sometimes I feel like I am in a race, but I am not sure what I am racing towards. It is at these times that I really want to slow down and listen to myself and to the students, instead of getting carried away in frantic energy.

JOURNAL 20: December 2, 1992

> We talked about our Christmas plans and they want a tree. I just need to keep it mellow.

REFLECTION ON JOURNAL

A teachers' rhythm is also affected by the events of the school, community, and the calendar. There are times in the year, especially around the holidays when the students are extremely rambunctious. I have to work very hard to keep them on track and not let external events dominate how things go in the classroom. Of course this is very difficult when it comes to Christmas. I have to make careful decisions about what we will be doing. I need to keep in mind how things will affect them and in turn affect me. This is evidence of the fact that I am thinking about and planning for the holidays in terms of how my students will react, and, that I am trying to find a balance between excitement over the holidays and what works in the classroom. Christmas is a particularly exciting time for children. As a teacher one wants to have events and curriculum related to the major holidays of the culture, but there is a delicate balance between order and chaos during the holiday times.

In conclusion, there has been a change over time in terms of my reaction to the students, but my rhythm in the classroom cannot be completely altered in a short period of time. I believe that rhythm will be a crucial issue

for some time. Maintaining a comfortable rhythm in the classroom is a reflection of what is going on with me as an individual. Accepting the natural flow of the classroom or life in general is a current challenge for me.

While the final chapter of this study is referred to as the conclusion I view it more in terms of a synthesis. In the following chapter I will further discuss my reflection on practice, my emergence of a metaphor, my personal and educational philosophy related to education, and recommendations for future research.

CONCLUSION

I have been keeping personal journals for seventeen years. I have found them to be a valuable tool for personal growth. While taking a curriculum course as part of my Masters Degree program at San Francisco State I was introduced to the book Teachers as Curriculum Planners: Narrative of Experience.It was in the fall of 1991 that I began to see that I would be able to realize one of my dreams: to have my field study, a requirement, be not just an academic exercise, but more importantly personally meaningful. It was exciting to read the work of Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin because their ideas echoed much of what I already believed. At this point I was in my third year of teaching. Fortunately beginning in my first year of teaching many of the teachers at my school met to share their stories outside of school and strong, lasting relationships were forged. The experience of sharing stories about teaching confirmed my belief that reflection was an important component in the process of becoming a good teacher. The desire to just think about what I was experiencing as a teacher became a need. I wanted time to contemplate all the variables involved in being a good teacher. As a result of all these factors, I decided to keep a professional journal based on field notes taken by myself on my practice as a classroom teacher. Before I began the actual data collection I talked to a friend and a teacher at San Francisco State. She gave me some articles suggested a few books, and sent me off.

As of now October 22, 1994 I have been working on this field study for a two and a half years. Keeping a professional journal as well as writing my experiences in an academic context has been painful, time consuming, exhilarating, frightening, and transforming.

I began this field study with the belief that reflection can lead to transformation. Writing about my feelings, thoughts, and ideas had already proved to be a successful method leading to the clarification of the complexities of various life problems, and increased my self-knowledge.

So I decided to merge my practice of "journaling" with my desire and need to look more closely at my practice as a teacher. My field text consisted of 117 pages of data so for purposes of my field study I chose to focus my analysis on my rhythm in the classroom. My results show that my reflection on practice did lead to a change in my classroom rhythm. Embedded in the idea of

rhythm is the concept that who you are as a person affects who you are as a teacher. The personal and the professional are intertwined. My field study helped me define who I am professionally as well as personally.

Out of my field text, rhythm arose as an important issue. I decided to take a closer look at my rhythm in the classroom because rhythm is the most basic element of a classroom. In many educational studies the focus of research is on the curriculum, as opposed to the teacher. I believe that the teacher is instrumental in the implementation of curriculum as well as in setting a tone for learning. My own personal philosophy about students and learning emerged throughout the field text. I believe that the process of self-observation is invaluable. I was able to identify many areas that I want to examine more closely. As a result of my field study, I was able to see the parts that make up the whole of teaching. There were many themes, ideas, attitudes, metaphors and values that emerged, but I chose to look more closely at rhythm in the classroom.

From the very first entry in my field notes, I was able to identify my need to make changes in my classroom rhythm. The next step in the process was to observe, and the last stage was affecting a change in my classroom rhythm. I now know the ideal, and I believe that as a result of the process of reflection, I have made some very positive changes.

I believe that one's personal philosophy determines classroom action. My philosophy about students is that they should be seen as guides to the teacher. Listening to students and their needs is essential to creating a safe, stress-reduced environment. Students need to feel comfortable and validated in order to learn. I am in a relationship with the students. I do not see myself as a person with all of the answers; I see value in the students' ideas. I believe that trusting the students as well as myself is fundamental to my philosophy of education. I am student-centered.

I believe that students have the need to express their voices, and this belief springs directly from my own frustration in school. I remember what it was like to be expected to sit and listen passively. Questioning was not encouraged because it would interfere with the agenda of the teacher. I feel emphatically towards teachers who face the dilemma of wanting to cover a certain amount and type of information, but I also remember how their goals affected me as a student. I did not feel that there was a place for me in the

classroom. I try very hard to create an environment in which the students can feel that they are an important element in the classroom.

I am motivated to change by my desire to become a better teacher and person. I want to give my students the best possible opportunities for learning; if I am not willing to reflect on my own actions, how can I expect them to do the same. I need to be the model. Being a teacher and role model is a daunting responsibility, but I know that, because I care for my students, I am able to make difficult changes.

When I think about my rhythm, I think about the metaphor of a river flowing smoothly. I have an image of a river in my mind. This river flows slowly and purposefully. When I come to a rock or another barrier in the river, I go around it without crashing against it. I adjust to the path. I strive to find creative ways to solve problems, I am open and flexible. In the discipline of yoga breath is important. The breath is the flow of energy through the body and much attention is placed on the importance of controlling it. This is similar to my metaphor of the river. The philosophy of yoga also stresses the importance of accepting without judgment. This is the ideal that I strive to emulate. I want to be calmer, relaxed, open and flexible. I want to be open to the students. I want them to be themselves, and to hold themselves in high esteem, because this is fundamental to learning. People must feel relaxed in order to learn new information and new ways of behaving. Learning is a process and self-acceptance is the key to this process.

I always try to think about the most effective action I can take in a situation. When I am working with students and a problem occurs, I think about what I want to achieve and how I can get there. I have learned that reacting out of frustration or tension does not move me closer to my goal. When I am frustrated, my metaphor comes to mind. I am like a river that is unruly. It is at this point I strive to get back to the flowing river. My metaphor is a guide to me. It gives be an image that I can refer to and is helpful because it gives me an idea of where I want to be. Before I had the opportunity to reflect on my practice, I did not have a guiding metaphor.

My data shows that transformation did occur through reflection. In the beginning of my field text I identified rhythm as an important issue. Throughout the field text there is evidence of a struggle to make a change in my classroom action. At the end of the field text there is evidence that I altered my action as a result of reflection. In addition, as a result of reflection, a

metaphor emerged from the field text. This metaphor serves to guide me in my classroom practice.

I believe that my study contributes to the area of action research concerned with self-reflection. Self-reflection provides a teacher with an opportunity to examine her practice closely and privately. Analyzing classroom practice can be painful, and for many teachers self-reflection allows them both privacy and control. Teachers can use reflection in a variety of ways and for a range of goals.

Self-reflection is a tool that both preservice and more experienced teachers can benefit from. Out of reflection comes self-knowledge. When approaching the process of reflection, the practitioner must be prepared to discover aspects of personal philosophy or classroom practice that may seem overwhelming or in some cases painful. For example, a preservice teacher or experienced teacher may discover through reflection that they do not really enjoy teaching or that they are not suited for the teaching profession for a variety of reasons. This discovery may seem devastating at first, but I strongly believe that a teacher must want to be in an educational setting. Ideally, everyone should have a job that she finds fulfilling, but in reality many people are unsatisfied with their occupations. The stakes in education are much higher. As teachers we can have enormous influence, whether it be positive or negative. Self-reflection can be used as a tool throughout a teacher's career. A teacher can focus on classroom practice, personal philosophy, or an assessment of job satisfaction.

As a result of my study I have become a "journaler," "journalizing" often and for a variety of reasons. I have found that the process of data collecting has aided me in the process of reflection on various areas related to education. Keeping data and then analyzing it for patterns is empowering. Data collection leads to a more objective perspective because it provides factual information. For example, if I can look at problems from a more objective perspective then I am able to make better informed decisions. Collecting data and analyzing it gives the researcher the opportunity to explore repeated patterns and themes that emerge related to a problem or a challenge. Self-reflection and data collection makes for a powerful combination. As a result of my field study I now define myself as an "educational activist." What I mean by this is that if I see a problem I can use my tools of data collection and self-reflection to arrive at the best possible solution. Sometimes the solution may

include taking political action whether it be at the school site, district, state, or federal level. Reflection on practice based on data collection keeps me in the process of an honest dialogue with myself. Often times we misunderstand problems because we don't really take the time to analyze the complexities of the situation. I decided to reflect on my practice as a teacher because I knew how important it was. I believe that I will always be a reflective teacher as well as a reflective person and I invite others to engage in the powerful process of self-reflection.

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